

vortis

“The Vortex is the point of maximum energy.”



Witness the new self-titled album by the Chicago quartet Vortis—the group’s fourth full-length, though in many ways a new beginning as the recorded debut of Louie Calvano (bass, guitar, vocals), Jim DeRogatis (drums), Chris Martiniano (guitar, bass, vocals, and art), and Tony Tavano (guitar, vocals).

The band formed in mid-2000, taking its name from the pre-World War I movement spearheaded by writers James Joyce and Ezra Pound and graphic artist Wyndham Lewis. Their goal: “To perpetuate violent structures of adolescent clarity” throughout life—that is, to live with the lust for life and joie de vivre of a teenager, which the band members thought was an ideal definition of rock ‘n’ roll half a century before the sound was born. Lewis gave both the original Vorticists and the band they inspired their emblem—the revolving energy cone, a symbol of power—and his work adorns the cover of Vortis.

The band’s original lineup of DeRogatis, Martiniano, Tavano, and vocalist/lyricist F.T. — a.k.a. “the Fellow Traveler,” a.k.a. Michael Weinstein, longtime professor at Purdue University and the author of 23 books of political philosophy—was dedicated to what F.T. called “punk-rock agitainment.” It performed regularly in Chicago and throughout the Midwest and released three albums: *Take the System Down* (Thick Records, 2002), *God Won’t Bless America* (Thick Records, 2004), and *Warzone* (self-released, 2006)—after which F.T./Weinstein left to devote all of his creative/anarchist energies to his political writings.

With three vocalists and four songwriters in the current lineup, the music on Vortis is less overtly political but no less thought-provoking, and even more intense. Recorded by Dan Dietrich at Wall to Wall Studios after two years of steady gigging in Chicago’s underground, it reflects the band’s well-honed live attack, which has been likened to a speeding freight train threatening to but never quite flying off the rails of its aggressive but melodic, old-school but forward-looking brand of art-punk. Just listen.

“Bored with cookie-cutter liberalism and conservatism? Sick of vandalism masquerading as anarchy? Desperately seeking proof that ‘rock’ doesn’t end at age 30? Well, Vortis just may be the Molotov cocktail you’re looking for.” —The Chicago Tribune

“These locals are out to polarize their audiences, and so far it’s working—I’ve actually had people get mad at me for recommending them. Painfully loud and confrontational, Vortis is determined to keep every performance unpredictable ... Their post-Situationist sense of shock value lets them spit on the flag-wavers and make it rock like no one since the Dead Kennedys at their peak.” —The Chicago Reader

“Fans of *Take the System Down*, I think, will agree that Vortis has shown considerable improvement between then and now. On *God Won’t Bless America*, the band has sustained the fire they ignited on their debut and kept it going at a more consistent pace.” — Punk International

“Taking a page from Reagan-era hardcore bands, this Chicago group is a bull in George Bush’s china shop, shattering the delicate and pristine glass goblets in which the high and mighty drink their wine, while the peasants eat cake... To borrow from Voltaire, I may not fully embrace Vortis, but I’m damn glad they exist; now more than ever.” —New City

“Remember the first time you listened to Crass or Dead Kennedys? I sure do. I can still remember at first being terrified of the noise that was being blasted from my speakers: All at once it was loud, abrasive, shrieking, feedback, and a vocalist that I could barely listen to... Well, to put it simply, this band blew my mind in just the first three songs. After them I had to shut off my CD player, and all at once the feelings from early in my punk life came flooding back to me.” —Punk News

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